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Health Reform Column: *Kansas-specific solutions for health reform*

The following is a column by Marci Nielsen, PhD, MPH, Executive Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority, regarding the health reform process ongoing in Kansas. The Health Policy Authority is a state agency created to develop and maintain a coordinated and data-driven health policy agenda, and it was tasked this year with reforming health care delivery in Kansas:

The goal of health reform is to provide access to affordable health care for all Kansans. The bill signed by the Governor last week, SB 11, begins that work by building the foundation for health reform and transformation and demonstrates bi-partisan commitment to improving the health of Kansans.

We need Kansas-specific solutions for reforming our health system. Fair, common sense health reform options will be developed to ensure that Kansans have access to quality, affordable health care.

This summer, the Health Policy Authority will be conducting a listening tour to visit with Kansans about providing and protecting affordable health insurance, the prevention of illness before it starts, and taking personal responsibility for our health, as individuals and as communities. In the fall, the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board, along with the Health for All Kansans Steering Committee, will put together health reform options for the Governor and Legislature to consider during the 2008 Kansas Legislature. These health reform options will be informed by the work of four advisory councils, whose work has already begun.

Among the many reform options we will be studying, we will explore a health insurance connector which creates a marketplace where Kansans could shop from a selection of policies. As each option is considered, an economic analysis will be conducted to demonstrate the cost and impact on Kansans.

Our approach to health reform will be data-driven with thoughtful analysis and stakeholder input. The legislature and Governor have outlined a process for the Health Policy Authority to develop health reform options that invest in the future of Kansas. As this work unfolds over the summer and into the fall, we invite your input and your perspective.

To track the progress of health reform in Kansas, the KHPA Board, Health for All Kansans Steering Committee, and Advisory Councils, visit www.khpa.ks.gov.

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